



Dear Seattle City Council members and Mayor Harrell:

Members of the Transit Riders Union have been watching the City of Seattle budget process with interest and are ready and willing to work with the Council and Mayor on moving transit ridership, reliability, and safety forward. We are writing today to address three budget items put forward by the Council that we believe will have a negative impact on transit, and urge that they be reconsidered.

First, we are curious and wary of a request that the Seattle Department of Transportation spend valuable staff time and resources to put together a report on criteria for painted, dedicated bus lane deployment in the city. To meet our city's 2030 climate goals, we need as many dedicated bus lanes in as many places for as many bus routes as can use them. TRU believes that unneeded reports will add further delay and hurdles to a process that already feels incredibly slow from a transit rider perspective. This does not appear to be a productive use of budget funds that the Council will need to balance against important needs.

We understand that some community members have concerns about where bus lanes go and TRU members have worked with various stakeholders and SDOT for years to balance trade-offs and compromises. However, pointing to ephemeral metrics such as "post-pandemic ridership" and "current commuting patterns" does not show a full picture, especially if the goal is to increase transit ridership and encourage different habits. Buses that are frequent, reliable, and on-time—something that painted, 24/7 bus lanes provide—have demonstrably converted drivers into transit riders.

Second, we have concerns about the proposals to remove both the South Lake Union streetcar, which currently operates, and the long-delayed Culture City Connector (1st Ave) streetcar. While the South Lake Union route may have lower ridership today, Amazon's planned full return-to-office requirement in January will almost certainly boost those numbers. We've invested in the infrastructure; scrapping it isn't the right call, expanding it is.

Streetcars provide level boarding and a consistent, robust onboard experience that benefits everyone, especially people with mobility needs, in reaching important services like hospitals and exciting destinations like Pike Place Market. The CCC is a vital link between the two detached routes. Construction impacts during the First Hill Streetcar project were pitched as necessary as, eventually, the CCC would link these two nearby but transit-distant neighborhoods with the vibrant waterfront and important downtown business district.

In the alternative, we strongly recommend that additional options for the First Hill Streetcar be put alongside any proposal to study removal of existing or proposed streetcar routes. For example, extending the First Hill Streetcar to the ferry terminal and Pike Place Market would still create a major connectivity boost.

Thank you for your time and effort,
Members of the Transit Riders Union